

revise the Organic Act to provide for the political and administrative re-organization of the Virgin Islands. With the Revised Organic Act of 1954, the present governmental structure of the Virgin Islands with its laws, administrative departments and its unicameral legislature were formed. The English literacy requirement instituted in 1936 was removed paving the way for Spanish speaking residents to have a voice in governmental affairs.

In 1968, after the First Constitutional Convention of 1964–65, the Elective Governor Act of 1968 provided for an elected governor and Lt. governor to serve four year terms, a delegate to Congress, and the lowering of the voting age to 18. In 1970, the U.S. Virgin Islands elected the first of its seven governors to office. The Honorable Melvin Evans was elected the first Governor. My predecessor, the Honorable Ron de Lugo became our first Delegate to Congress and I am proud to serve as the fourth elected and first woman Delegate to Congress.

Since that time there have been several attempts to deal with the internal structure of our government, through drafting a new Constitution in 1981 and through a referendum on the nature of the territory's relationship to the United States which culminated in a referendum in 1993. This summer, Virgin Islanders will again attempt to draft a constitution to address many of the structural issues that continue to pose challenges to governance and every day living. It is my hope that on the 90th anniversary of the Transfer and our sojourn as part of the American family that we use it to analyze, plan and bring to fruition a common vision for our territory by 2017, the hundredth anniversary celebration.

Madam Speaker, there is much good that has come from this 90-year-old relationship between the U.S. Virgin Islands and the United States of America. Our islands have not only grown in population and diversity, but have made strides in governmental infrastructure and the provision of services in health, education, transportation infrastructure, and social welfare. Much of this has been accomplished in partnership with the federal government. There are many challenges that have also arisen because of rapid growth and development and lack of control over issues such as border control and the lack of a plan to manage our resources to include land and water use. We have been a beacon for development and advancement in the region and have attracted people from all over the world. It is my hope that this 90th anniversary will strengthen our resolve to become a stronger, more cohesive community with a dream and a plan for peace and prosperity into this 21st century and beyond.

RECOGNIZING THE COMMUNITY OF COLLYER, KANSAS

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 12, 2007

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the citizens of Collyer, Kansas for continuing efforts to sustain and revitalize their community.

On September 26, 2004 that effort was formalized through creation of the Collyer Com-

munity Alliance. Donna Malsom, president of the alliance, said the organization was formed because residents want to see their hometown raise another generation of Kansans. "Our community is made up of hard working individuals who pull together to support businesses, projects and each other, Malsom said. "Through our combined efforts, we made a conscious decision to 'save' our community."

Despite its small size—133 people—Collyer is making a large commitment to its future. In the nearly 30 months since it was formed, the alliance has grown from zero to more than 200 paid memberships.

In order to obtain financing for community initiatives, the alliance has conducted a number of fundraising activities—the most famous of which are fish fries that are held every Friday evening during the Lenten season. In 2006, more than 1,000 plates were served. Having personally attended a fish fry, I can affirm that the food is delicious and the community spirit is inspiring.

Funds have also been raised by organizing Hunter's Burgers and Brats and Ground Hog Celebration Soup suppers, the Walsh Auction Lunch, Quinter School Forensics Tournament Lunch, WaKeeney Trash and Treasure Flea Market, Quinter May Day Celebration, Switchback Benefit Barn Dance and alumni celebrations. Money raised from these activities is supplemented by generous financial support from individuals, families, businesses and local units of government. Since its inception, approximately 75 entities have achieved "sponsor" status through the alliance.

This fundraising effort translates into impressive promotion of and support for the community. Last year, the Collyer Café opened in the refurbished Saint Michael's Convent. The alliance purchased the convent and the community donated well over 1,000 volunteer hours to this restoration project.

In July, the community hosts an After Harvest Music Festival which brings approximately 500 people to town. In October, the Fall Street Festival attracts more than 1,000 visitors to Collyer.

The alliance further promotes Collyer by maintaining an extensive website at www.collyerks.com. The site includes a history of the community, ongoing development projects, fundraising activities and community events.

An effort is being made to preserve the legacy of Collyer by obtaining historical designations on 14 community buildings. The Saint Michael's Buildings, Zeman Dance Hall, the old mercantile/grocery store and the Collyer Depot are just a few of these historically significant structures. With persistent effort, the alliance has achieved 501(C)3 nonprofit status retroactive to May of 2005. This approval is allowing the community to aggressively pursue restoration efforts.

An additional boost to preserve Collyer's legacy occurred in May of 2006 when the community was awarded a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council in support of an initiative to gather and record stories of immigrant families that settled in Collyer. Alliance members supplied the volunteer hours needed to complete this and several other grant applications.

Sandra Stenzel, community volunteer, acknowledges that the work required to create a future for Collyer is not easy. However, she believes the effort is worth it. "Our community

was founded on the principles of faith, freedom, education, progress and agriculture," Stenzel said. "We are proud of our past, but we are even prouder of the vision we have for the future and the plan we have to get there."

For rural communities to survive and prosper, citizens must be willing to create their own opportunities for success. Ongoing efforts to revitalize Collyer are an example of how hard work, vision and involvement support can create just such an opportunity. Citizens throughout Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Collyer is a developing success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.

WALTER REED MEDICAL CENTER

SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the scandal at Walter Reed Army Medical Center has placed a spotlight on our entire military and veteran health care system. That is a good thing because the system is in need of a thorough reorganization. As a result of cuts in VA health care, more than a quarter of a million vets were refused enrollment in 2005 alone because they "didn't qualify". How many of these men and women were told when they reported for duty that they may or may not "qualify" for veteran's care after separation?

Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the notion that America's promise to its veterans is subject to later, arbitrary qualifications, but that quarter of a million veterans is the number we know of. Perhaps even more insidious are those vets who because of their PTSD or other injuries were discharged with less than honorable discharges most of the time with no hearing, no review. These men and women now reside in a kind of abyss between earth and hell. They have served their nation but their nation has turned its collective backs on them.

Mr. Speaker, we need to recall Vietnam Vet Jim Hopkins who finally drove his Jeep into the lobby of the Wadsworth VA Hospital out of frustration and protest in 1981. Jim Hopkins didn't get the treatment he needed and couldn't get anyone in the VA or the administration to listen to him. His subsequent tragic death led to a fifty-three day hunger strike by vets and finally shed some national light on our refusal to acknowledge the reality of PTSD and the impact of dioxin on the human nervous system. Now, a quarter of a century later there are many more frustrated vets, men and women who responded when their nation called, men and women who we have promised lifetime medical care in return who are shut out of the VA system. Men and women have been kicked to the curb, unseen and unserved. Mr. Speaker, the hour and day have come: it is time for this Congress, in turn, to kick open the doors of the VA system—to ensure that every veteran, every veteran, has received his or her due for their service.